

**IMPORTANCE OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP IN STEVEN
SODERBERGH'S *ERIN BROCKOVICH* (2000): A HUMANISTIC
PSYCHOLOGICAL CRITICISM**



RESEARCH PAPER

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Erin Brockovich (2000) is a biopic, drama, and romantic movie. This movie is a true story that is carried out from the biography of Erin Brockovich, a famous lawyer. This movie is directed by Steven Soderbergh an American director who received Best Director nominations in the same year for the Academy Awards (Golden Globes and the Directors' Guild of America). The producers are Danny DeVito, Stacy Sher, Michael Shambegh, Gail Lyon, and John Hardy. The screenwriter is Susannah Grant an American screenwriter that was born on January 4, 1963 in New York. This was distributed by Universal Studios (USA) and Columbia Pictures (non-USA). The duration is 130 minutes. This film was released in the United States on March 14, 2000, and March 17, 2000. The locations of filming were taken in Baker, Barstow, Boron, and Hinkley, California, USA. The budget for Erin Brockovich movie was \$51,000,000 and the gross revenue as much \$256,271,286. It was covered the budget that was spent for making this film.

Erin Brockovich movie's story began with a desperate woman who was looking for a job. She was a single mother from three children who had two-times being divorced. Because of an accident, she got a job in a small firm in California. When she worked, she found a box of real estate case that it was not finished yet. She was confused when she read the data from this case,

because she found many healthy notes included in the box, she did not know what that was for. Then she asked permission from Ed Masry (her boss in the firm) to find out what happened.

There, she found the fact that PG&E used contaminated hexavalent chromium or poisoned water around Hinkley included Hinkley itself. Therefore, it caused Hinkley's citizen got a bad health, like cancers, kidney fail, asphyxia, and so on. Erin felt so sorry and promised to make PG&E paid for what it was made. Erin felt like in that condition when she took this case. She imagined when it was happened in her family. As human, Hinkley citizen needed to watch their children grew up as many children else. They also had right to get good life, had healthy child, had good water, and had good health. Hinkley citizen trusted Erin to help them. They could see that Erin assumed them as her family, she had good attitude when asked some question or searched data from Hinkley citizen, she didn't assume that they were clients as victims that needed help from a lawyer.

Teresa and Kurt Potter as new partners of Ed Masry who handled this case assumed that Erin's data was not complete yet. Then Teresa tried to complete the data from Hinkley citizen. Because her attitude and her words which assumed that they were as a victims, she didn't get anything. When Erin got the complete data, PG&E was prosecuted for about 600 demands. And PG&E was ordered to pay a compensation amount of \$333 million divided among 634 plaintiffs. This case made small firm's Ed Masry become large and famous.

This movie got various responses from audience, market, and movies industry both pro or contra. Many audience decided to give support or pro to this movie, for example Mattkratz from Richardson, Texas (September 25, 2001) said he was felt Julia Robert's role as single mother that was almost single-handedly exposes a plant contaminating a town's water supply and her fight was trully inspiring. Danny McCabe from Lancashire, England, United Kingdom (March 28, 2006) said he would give this movie 10/10 rating a true life drama which is hard, touching, and inspiring. Erin Brockovich has good music that she love. And Lee Eisenberg from Portland, Oregon, USA (October 18, 2005) said he wasn't like Julia Robert. He thought that much Julia Robert's role like as a bitch, but he agreed when Erin Brockovich movie got Oscar. He felt this movie really good. And the contra side, there was Ted (tedg@FilmsFolded.com) from Virginia Beach (May 3,2001) told that this movie unrealistic. The Director (Stephen Soderbergh) just wanted to make money machine by Julia Robert in his movie. Stromtrac2 (March 15, 2001) said that Julia Robert in *Erin Brockovich* did not worthy to get an OSCAR. He or she thought that Ellen Burstyn in *Requiem for a Dream* better than Robert. And Flick Filosopher (March 17,2000) said Erin Brockovic h was not good movie, it only described a single mother that had twice divorced and a childish mother. She can not controll her feeling in her case.

From market, Erin Bockovich movie was included into box office movie with earning in first week (March 17-19, 2000) as much as \$28,138 million; second week (March 24-26, 2000) \$18,546 million; third week

(March 31- April 2, 2000) \$13,798 million. Three weeks as a winner in box office, *Erin Brockovich* movie become runner up in fourth week (April 7-9, 2000) with earning \$9,808 million. And the fifth week, this movie stayed in the fourth rank and get \$7,030 million. From the movie industry, this movie has gotten 28 awards and 42 nominations. Four of the awards were won from the Oscar Award in 2001 (Best Actress in a Leading Role), BAFTA Film Award in 2001 (Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role), Critics Choice Award in 2001 (Best Actress), and DFWFCA Award in 2001 (Best Supporting Actor). Some of the nominations that were nominated in 2001 Oscar including (Best Director, Best Picture, and Best Actor in a Supporting Role) and nominated BAFTA Film Award in 2001 (Best Editing, Best Film, and Best Screenplay).

The writer takes *Erin Brockovich* (2000) movie as her data source because this movie is interesting to be studied in some reasons. The first, *Erin Brockovich* has a good characterization, she is described as a slow reader but she has good side in remembering. It helps her in remembering telephone number, name, address, and diseases of her clients.

The second reason is about the setting of place. *Erin Brockovich* is being set in California at 1993, especially in Hinkley where the actual location and setting time of contamination took place. Hinkley is like a desert that has dry air and much wind. Because this movie takes place in the dry place, the lighting must support the place that looks dry and real with using yellow lamp for the background.

The third reason is the theme. *Erin Brockovich* movie carries unusual theme. It was about some citizens that get bad influence from a factory and do not realize until Erin comes and offers cooperation between them to get compensation.

The last reason is the plot. The conflict that appears, started from her children, her feeling, her life, and her love story when she holds Hinkley case makes this movie interesting to be watched and to be analyzed.

Here the writer will use humanistic psychological theory by Abraham Maslow to analyze the movie manuscript, especially in the Erin Brockovich's interpersonal relationship with the citizen of Hinkley. It is done because the humanistic psychological theory analyzes the motivation or psychological motivation of the character. And the writer wants to explore and to show the important of Erin Brockovich's interpersonal relationship between her and Hinkley citizen to get the goal for finishing the case.

The writer is interested in Erin Brockovich's (Julia Robert) interpersonal relationship between her and Hinkley citizen as the victims of PG&E. She finds out some information, trust, and finally gets the justice for them. The writer is interested in conducting a research entitled **“Importance of Interpersonal Relationship in Steven Soderbergh's *Erin Brockovich* (2000): A Humanistic Psychological Criticism”**.

B. Literature Review

To provide the originality of the research, the writer presents some previous researches related to the movie. Here is a study of *Erin Brockovich* (2000):

First researcher is Hendriyati (2008) from Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. Her research is entitled *Stereotyping of Single Parent Reflected in Steven Soderbergh's Erin Brockovich: A Liberal Feminist Approach*. The major problem of this study is to reveal how the stereotyping of single parent is reflected in the *Erin Brockovich* movie directed by Steven Soderbergh.

The results of this research show that: the first, structural elements of *Erin Brockovich* movie build good production; second, *Erin Brockovich* movie describes the stereotyping of Erin Brockovich as single parent and the major character in the movie; the third, Erin Brockovich is a single parent but she can play both roles as mother and father.

Second researcher is Armaida Puspitasari (2009) from Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. Her research is entitled *Women's Independence in Steven Soderbergh's Erin Brockovich: A Feminist Approach*. The major problem of this study is to reveal how women's independence is reflected in *Erin Brockovich* movie directed by Steven Soderbergh.

The results of this research show that: the first, structural elements of *Erin Brockovich* movie build good production; the second, *Erin Brockovich* movie describes the women's independent of Erin Brockovich; the third, Erin

Brockovich can fight for social intention level, dare to struggle, and can practice the communication role that become the characteristic of women's independent.

Third researcher is Ratna Mayasari (2004) from Sebelas Maret University of Surakarta. Her research is entitled *Potret Perempuan Single Parent di Amerika Serikat dalam Film “ Erin Brockovich”*: Analisis *Semiologi Komunikasi*. The major problem of this study is to reveal how the obsession of woman as a single parent in United State is reflected in *Erin Brockovich* movie directed by Steven Soderbergh.

The results of this research show that: the first *Erin Brokovich* movie describes the obsession of Erin Brockovich as single parent in the United State; the second, Erin Brokovich is a single parent but she wants to show her ability to the society that woman can be success in her life and career.

From the researches above, the writer has different focus on her research that aims at analyzing the motivation or psychological motivation of the major character, Erin Brockovich, in her effort to find a justice with interpersonal relationship ways between her and Hinkley citizen. Here, the writer is going to explore the importance of personal relationship between Erin Brockovich and Hinkley citizen using the theory of Abraham Maslow.

C. Problem Statement

Based on the background of choosing the subject above, the problem is how the importance of interpersonal relationship is reflected in the movie.

Interpersonal relationship is the term for social interest or a feeling with humanity that involves deep profound feelings for individuals. Self actualizers have big-brotherly feeling toward people in general, but their close friendships are limited to only a few (Feist, 1985: 392). They are not to be friends with everyone but they need to be friends with few people with quite deep and intense interaction in their relationship.

D. Limitation of the study

To carry out this study, the researcher needs to limit the study. The writer is going to analyze the main character, Erin Brockovich, viewed by Maslow's humanistic psychology.

E. Objective of the Study

The objectives of the research are:

1. To analyze the movie based on its structural elements.
2. To analyze the movie based on the humanistic psychological criticism.

F. Benefit of the Study

The benefits expected from this research are as follow:

1. Theoretical benefit: to give some contributions to the larger body of knowledge or the development of knowledge particularly studies in Steven Soderbergh's Erin Brockovich (2000).

2. Practical benefit: to get a better understanding about the movie and the application of the humanistic psychological criticism.

G. Research Method

1. Type of the study

There are several kinds of method that can be used in a research and what method should be used depends on the purposes of the research. The type of this research is a descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research is a type of research, which results the descriptive data in the form of written or oral words from observed object. The data in this research are qualitative data, in form of words, spoken or written of people and analyzed attitudes.

In brief, descriptive qualitative research is research employing the method of collecting, describing, classifying and analyzing the data and then drawing conclusion. The data can be sentences, discourse, pictures diary and memorandum. By using the descriptive method, this research is aimed to describe the importance of interpersonal relationship that is built between Erin Brockovich and Hinkley citizen by doing various ways in *Erin Brockovich* movie based on Humanistic psychology.

2. Type of data and data source

The type of data of this study are the images such like the scene of the movie itself and the texts such like words, phrases, and sentences in dialogues or monologues. The writer takes two kinds of data source:

a. Primary data source

Primary data is the main data obtained from all the images which are taken from the movie like the scene of the movie itself and the texts such as words, phrases, and sentences in dialogues or monologues occurring in the movie related to the topic.

b. Secondary data source

Secondary data is the supporting data taken from the literary books, criticism, and some articles related to the movie.

3. Technique of the data collection

The writer collects the data by taking notes from the texts and by capturing images for the images. She uses library research in collecting data which involves several steps:

- a. Watching the *Erin Brockovich* movie carefully and repeatedly in order to get the best understanding of all messages, ideas, and other significant points.
- b. Reading some relevant books to get the theory being used to analyze the movie, data, and information to support her study.
- c. Taking the significant data and then writing some notes of the important part of sources.
- d. Writing the data on the paper.
- e. Classifying the data into groups according to the category of the elements of the literary study.

4. Technique of the data analysis

Data analysis in this study consists of two steps:

- a. Classifying and categorizing the data.
- b. Interpreting the data based on humanistic psychology theory by Abraham Maslow.

H. Research Paper Organization

This research consists of five chapters. Chapter I is introduction which consists of background of the study, literature review, research problem, objective of the research, benefit of the study, research methodology, and the last is research organization. Chapter II is the underlying theory which consists of notion humanistic psychology and the major principles of theory. Chapter III is structural analysis of the movie which contains the structural elements- narrative elements (character and characterization, setting, point of view, plot, theme), technical elements (mise-en-scene consists of setting, costume and make-up, lighting, figure expression and movement; cinematography which consists of the photographic qualities, the framing of the shot, and the duration of the shot; editing; and sound), and discussion. Chapter IV is humanistic psychological analysis of the important of interpersonal relationship. The last is chapter V which consists of conclusion and suggestion.